A JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMME

UTILIZING A PEER COUNSELLING MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The paper is presented in two parts. The first deals with the definition, rationale, origins, and practice of peer counselling. The second part outlines an "assignment" and "outreach" model of peer counselling for a juvenile crime prevention programme, defines the following components and presents options within them for consideration: needs and objectives, building a support base, selection and training of the trainers, selection and training of the peer counsellors, implementation, administration and supervision of the peer counsellors and the programme, and project evaluation.

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A. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO PEER COUNSELLING

Until recently, young people have been ignored as a resource able to provide assistance to their peers. In fact, peer culture itself is often seen as a powerful negative force in need of adult control and management. However, without the active help of juveniles in resolving their own psychological problems and crises of human development, it is unlikely that crime prevention programmes or services will be successful or effective. Prevention approaches must engage youth as co-operative allies and abandon attempts to win them over through reason or logic. In addition, professionals must accept the influence power of the existing social network and learn how to enhance the foundations and purposes of the network. Professionals must also recognize the "street" skills, needs, and behaviors which already are part of a juvenile's repertoire and build on these. Preventive services cannot continue to mold, shape or force youngsters to fit a model of professional delivery which is alien to the culture it is attempting to serve. Instead, youth services must be based on a thorough understanding and use of the factors influencing child and adolescent development.

Programmes or approaches using these developmental ideas are beginning to emerge and gain credibility. Peer tutoring (Allen, 1976), positive peer culture (Vorrath and Brendtro, 1974) and peer counselling (Carr, 1980; Myrick and Erney, 1978; Varenhorst, 1974), are examples of interventions which draw on principles of development and the values of the existing student network.

Peer counselling can be used at many age levels to attend to a variety of problems such as drug and alcohol abuse (Samuels and Samuels, 1975), stress management (Walley, 1980), teenage pregnancies (Foster and Miller, 1980), loneliness (Carr and Saunders, 1979), friendship (Varenhorst, 1978), and school violence (Petrillo, 1976). Since it can easily be extended to a variety of other

areas such as crime prevention or vocational and career development (Carr & Saunders, 1979; Carr, 1980), the purpose of this article is to describe the theory and origins of peer counselling, and to present an "assignment" and/or "outreach" model of a peer counselling programme as a juvenile crime prevention programme.

What is peer counselling? Basically peer counselling is a way for people to learn how to care about others and put their caring into practice. It relies strongly on communication skills to facilitate self-exploration and decision-making. Peer counsellors are not professional counsellors or therapists. They are adolescents who provide supervised assistance to other adolescents to help them think through and reflect on concerns they might be experiencing. A trained peer counsellor who is recruited from a core social network can have numerous informal and spontaneous contacts thus multiplying the impact on a variety of other adolescents. These contacts can enhance the climate of the school, community or organization, and can act as a bridge between professional counselling and adolescents who will not see professional counsellors.

Peer counselling is a deliberate and systematic form of psychological education. It enables teenageers to acquire the skills to implement their powerfully experienced values of autonomy and control. By focusing on the process of thinking, feeling and deciding, rather that specifically evaluating the content, peer counselling contributes to the most powerfully experienced need of adolescents: respect. The peer counsellor is trained to provide a nonjudgemental listening posture which encourages others to express and explore their concerns, worries or frustrations. This exploration often prevents self-destructive or other acting-out behaviors by encouraging a person to talk with someone who listens, or "has been there" or can empathize.

Some persons have expressed concern about the word "counsellor" being applied to teenagers, and are worried that the term has professional connotations.

Various programmes have dealt with this concern by calling their trained adolescents by some other titles such as peer facilitators, junior counsellors, counsellor aides or buddies. The importance is not in the title but in how the teenagers relate to other teenagers, and the way in which these relationships can be used to enhance their development.

What are the origins of peer counselling? In order to understand the training and programme operations of peer counselling, it may be useful to explore briefly the nine foundation areas which have significantly contributed to its creation and led to its natural development.

Over the past few years, a number of large-scale evaluations of school counselling have taken place across Canada (Carr, 1978; Guerette, 1981; Haughey and Bowman, 1980). While these studies had somewhat different purposes, were conducted with a variety of student populations and used differing survey instruments, some of their conclusions are remarkably similar: only a minority of students ever go to see counsellors, and most students, when they are experiencing some kind of personal concern, rely primarily on their friends as sources of help. With only minor changes in percentages, these findings hold true regardless of age level, quality of counselling available, or experience in working with a counsellor. Similar studies conducted in the United States (Prediger, Roth and Noeth, 1974) have demonstrated the same results: friends remain the number one in-school resource for students considering personal decisions, job plans, and how far to go with formal education.

A second foundation for peer counselling comes from research on the helping relationship itself (Carkhuff, 1969; Egan, 1975; and Ivey, 1971). The skills associated with effective helping have not only been described and demystified, but have also been shown to be learnable by a variety of lay persons, including paraprofessionals (Carkhuff, 1969), high school students (Carr and Saunders, 1979;

Saunders, 1982), junior high students (Carr, McDowell and McKee, 1981) and elementary age students (Bowman and Myrick, 1981). The training itself can also serve as a form of treatment through which peer counsellors enhance their own development and psychological growth. An important implication of helping skill research is that the skills are not only helpful, but can be taught to younger persons so that they can use the skills within the youth culture. While a number of recent therapy advances appear promising (neurolinguistic programming, for example), it is unclear as to whether young people can learn to use these approaches.

Across North America, high school students have responded to surveys designed to assess what they see as the major problems confronting youth today (Carr, 1980). The results, which serve as the third foundation block, consistently reveal that loneliness or making and keeping friends are either the highest or among the top five concerns of young people. Student rankings often differ remarkably from adult perceptions of the major problems confronting youth. This difference is an example of a potential "generation gap" which may prevent students from seeking help from adults.

Even though friendship concerns occupy a major proportion of students' time, and as Rubin (1980) has stated, are often the sources of greatest pleasure and deepest frustration, social scientists have paid virtually no attention to them. It is likely that friends can help each other learn things that are unique and cannot be taught by parents or educators. Debilitating conditions at home can often be neutralized through involvement with peers in school (Rubin, 1980). Contrary to popular opinion, friendship patterns do not remain stable within the school or community context, and it appears that the purposes of friendship change as students get older. Senior high students describe a friend as a person who listens, helps and communicates in depth. Friendships are characterized by mutuality or a willingness to be helpers to each other.

Many teenagers have learned how to make friends and remain quite popular with their peers, even though sometimes they are not particularly popular with their teachers. These students have acquired certain skills which enable them to be attentive and supportive, to manage conflicts appropriately, to be sensitive to others and to express thoughts and ideas in ways which do not threaten the esteem of others. While this knowledge of how to make and keep friends can contribute to success, it is only secondary to an ability and willingness to use the skills in a practical way. Students who possess these skills are, more often than not, unaware of what they actually do. These students when involved in reflective-oriented training can easily learn how to teach others to do what they do to make and keep friends.

The fourth basis for using adolescents to help other adolescents comes from the emphasis on primary prevention (Albee and Joffe, 1981) within the mental health movement and the application of preventive counselling (Carr, 1976) within school or community settings. Prevention programmes have a two level thrust: they emphasize the need to strengthen (or immunize) students against harmful influences (by providing skills in resolving problems more effectively) and they also reduce the incidence of psychologically destructive factors within the environment (eliminating an uncaring environment, for example).

Teenagers' needs for competency (to be strong), intelligence (not academic, but to know the "scene", keep from getting "conned"), responsible role taking (to be respected), and self-esteem (to be valued and understood) form the basis for foundation five. Adolescents recognize how powerful these needs are and verbalize them through their best-shot, "put-down" comments such as: "baby, boring, suck, dumb, stupid, weird, retard"; and through their best compliments such as: "fox, Mr. Macho, cool, got-it-together". Adults often react to the superficial manifestations of these needs with patronizing, scornful or disrespectful behavior (often with the

intention of "helping"), but the adolescents, being intensely sensitive to these needs, will retreat further, fight back or become self-destructive. They generally turn to other adolescents who have shared similar embarrassing, humiliating or need-ignoring experiences, and who listen, not to approve or disapprove but to accept and understand.

Research and knowledge about human development closely parallels adolescents' needs and serves as the sixth foundation. A key issue in adolescence is independence, but as Ivey (1977) has pointed out, it is important to understand independence in relation to peer culture perspectives. For example, Coleman (1980) has discovered that for teenage boys, independence means freedom from constraint, the freedom in life to become what one wishes; whereas for girls, independence means internal freedom, or the opportunity to be one's self and to have some autonomy with respect to one's feelings and thoughts.

Adolescence has also been described as a time of identity seeking and, using Erikson's terms, of securing identity and avoiding identity diffusion. Yet all too often counsellors have assumed this time to be a teenager's search for the "real self" when, in fact, it is less of a time when one finds oneself and more of a time when one makes oneself. It is the daily interactions and experiences (or lack of) that adolescents have with fellow students which shape the self perception more dramatically than any amount of self-reflection or intelligence.

Despite the glut of textbooks on adolescent development, very little is really known about individual differences among teenagers. For example, as developmental specialists, it is clear to us that the power of the peer group is not only greatly misunderstood but also grossly exaggerated. This is perpetuated by adults seeing all teenagers as the same and ignoring the importance of the developmental processes which teenagers undergo: processes such as important changes and differences in friendship, group memberships, motivation and values.

Counsellors may be particularly insensitive to the social evolution of peer groups or cliques and may overrate their impact and influences as well as misunderstand their constructive role.

The effects of peers tutoring peers (Allen, 1976; Gartner, Kohler and Reissman, 1971) has received considerable attention and serves as another foundation block. Generally, research on tutoring supports the value of using peers to improve the achievement and esteem of other students. Research has suggested that tutoring is as helpful for the tutor as for the tutee (Chandler, 1976) and that student-tutors may surpass teacher-tutors in helping some students (Karegianes, Pascarella and Pfaum, 1980). In addition, many students prefer to learn from peers. Evidence gathered by Price (1980) on student learning styles indicates that students are less teacher motivated in the higher grades and that low motivated, learning disabled students are more likely to be peer oriented. Research by Shaefer (1980) and Condry and Siman (1980) has revealed that peer oriented students become dependent on the peer group not by choice but by necessity because of a lack of attention and affection at home. This shift occurs around sixth grade and is followed by pre-delinquent behavior in grades seven and eight.

The increasing establishment of self-help (Romeder, 1981) or mutual aid groups (Peavy, 1978) provides the eighth origin for peer counselling. Such groups are formed by peers whose mutual needs are often unmet by existing services or who are unable or unwilling to use available institutions. They meet to address shared or common concerns and often rely on the relationships of members to members to resolve problems, using support and catharsis as a problem-solving intervention. Probably the most famous and most successful group using this method (in terms of longevity, participation and outcomes) is Alcoholics Anonymous. Women's groups, weight watchers, cancer patients, family groups, single parents and Parents of Murdered Children are just a few additional

examples. Adolescents have formed their own mutual aid groups, yet the positive, coping functions of these groups to assist in the healthy development of teenagers has virtually been ignored for the more sensationalist negative or conflict producing behaviors. While we have no formal research to support our observations, it appears that young people aged 8 to 12 are also tending to form groups or mousepacks, thus indicating an earlier age for peer orientation.

Finally, the last foundation for peer counselling is based on manpower supply and costs. The historic 1961 report of the Joint Commission on Mental Illness clearly specified the need to improve community resources rather than to spend extensive funds on professional training. Despite increases in professional personnel and advances in effective therapeutic interventions, the problems of teenagers continue to outpace the growth and availability of formal help. Skyrocketing costs for services, unmanageable case loads, and long waiting lists, growing cynicism about the skills of professionals, and frightening statistics about adolescent death, disability, violence and depression all emphasize the need to enlist the support of adolescents to help each other. Students generally know much sooner than adults when another student is experiencing trouble, and can be in closer, more spontaneous contact. Peer counsellors supplement existing counselling services, and can free counsellors to work with or refer seriously troubled adolescents. Peer counsellors can also serve as a bridge to enable troubled adolescents to accept professional help.

B. THE PROGRAMME

One of the major findings that has come out of the research regarding the practical application of the peer counselling model is its adaptability both to age groups and to types of problems (Carr and Saunders, 1979; Carr, 1980). At the same time, this feature can also be considered somewhat of a disadvantage when one is asked to adapt the peer counselling model to a particular situation, group or community before the specifics are provided. Although there is a general model, individual peer counselling programmes are "site-specific", and as the specifics are not yet available, an example of a peer counselling programme using an assignment and/or outreach approach is presented as a possible juvenile crime prevention programme. The proposal defines the following components and presents options within them for consideration: needs and objectives, building a support base, selection and training of the trainers, selection and training of the peer counsellors, implementation, administration and supervsion of the peer counsellors and the programme, and project evaluation.

1. Needs and Objectives

The overall objective of this project has already been determined: the prevention/reduction of juvenile crime using a peer counselling model. Upon identifying a group or community interested in considering this project, the first step towards implementation is to meet with the members of the group or community to establish: a) their specific needs and b) the objectives of the programme based upon identified needs. This sequence is important for several reasons:

1) it eliminates confusion and problems later on if needs, objectives, time-lines, and responsibilities are clearly defined and written out;

2) the objectives need to be clearly stated because they influence the selection and training of the peer counsellors, and the implementation, administration, and final evaluation of the project;

3) although the model and the expertise is provided, to help ensure the success of the programme, it must be "owned" by the group or community members and the major portion of the responsibility for the programme should be theirs from the beginning;

4) by involving the interested parties such as the police, social workers, teachers, parents, teenagers, etc. from the beginning, a large support base for the programme is provided from within the community.

The role of the consultant at this time would be to facilitate this planning stage of the programme.

2. Support Base

As was mentioned earlier, in order to ensure the success of the programme, a strong base of support is needed within the community. One very effective way of obtaining support is to form an Advisory Committee. This committee can serve several functions:

1) to be responsible for the overall administration of the project;

2) to act in an advisory/supportive capacity to a volunteer or paid project director;

3) to serve as a liaison between the project and the community so that a committee member can deal with a person or a group in the community who has a concern, complaint, etc. For example, ideally, a parent from the committee would deal with a parent, a teacher with a teacher, etc.

Assuming that a person, organization or a group from a community has requested the implementation of this type of programme, the first step in forming

an Advisory Committee would be to meet with a nucleus of interested people. They would then decide upon the makeup of the committee and recruit if need be. For people joining the committee, three criteria would have to be pre-determined: their level of commitment, their purpose on the committee (expertise, contacts, etc.), and their role.

The final step would be to establish an administrative structure through which members would seek support for the programme. Clearly, the Advisory Committee of a juvenile crime prevention programme should consist of people involved in that area, such as police, social workers, probation officers, education personnel, parents, the adolescents themselves, and so forth. These and other special interest groups need to be considered, approached, informed and possibly included.

The role of the consultant would be to facilitate the formation of the Advisory Committee or other sub-groups, by methods determined by the community members. The consultant's second major function would be to help the Advisory Committee develop their strategies to deal with the supporters and detractors of the programme.

Considering the current economic climate, instead of hiring a project co-ordinator, it may be advisable to have a volunteer project director or the Advisory Committee itself oversee the programme. The hiring of a co-ordinator or director should not be ruled out, but, on a priority basis, should be secondary to the formation of a volunteer committee and/or the use of a volunteer co-ordinator. Also, the size of the project will determine the administrative structure.

Whether an Advisory Committee is formed, or the programme is run by one person; whether the programme is administered from one school or from an entire community, in building a support base there are several processes that require the development of appropriate strategies:

1. determine who the groups are that are involved with adolescents;
2. determine which groups would and would not be supportive of such a project, then confirm those assumptions;
3. develop strategies to include those groups who have expressed an interest in the project and to deal with those groups who may not be supportive of this type of programme;
4. include adolescents along with the other interest groups;
5. keep the community informed to help ensure that responses to what the committee is doing will range, generally, from neutral to positive. If the community is left uninformed, the project is open to trouble, conflict or problems that may preclude its success;
6. consider the thoughts and feelings of groups which are not represented on the committee; listen to them and keep them informed. Again, if support is not forthcoming from these groups, the success of the project might be jeopardized.

3. Selection and Training of Trainers and Peer Counsellors

Once the objectives of the project, the administrative structure and the support base have been established, the next step is to select and train the peer counsellors. If the resource people in the community are not familiar with the peer counselling process, then an additional step would be to select and train the trainers.

Our experience has shown us that it is more cost efficient, and that learning is more effective if we select, train and supervise a group of trainers rather than train the first group of peer counsellors with potential trainers looking on.

a) Trainer Selection and Training The first step is to select 8 to 10 volunteers interested in working with the peer counselling project. This does not mean that all 10 would become trainers, but it does mean that there would be 10 people who would have a thorough understanding of what is involved with training; a group of 10 to choose trainers from; and a group of people who would know the peer counsellors and who could offer supervision and support to them when they are out helping in the "real world". Also, when dealing with volunteers, it is better to have "extras".

The second step establishes agreed-upon training times. This can be accomplished in one of several ways. For example:

1. Participants attend the University of Victoria for a three unit credit course, ED.-D 480/Peer Counselling. The course involves 8 to 10 days of intensive training from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM daily. Admissions requirements for this course and course scheduling are determined by the University.
2. Same format as in #1 only the training would take place in the community.
3. Four to five weekend workshops in the community could be held, involving one or two weekends per month, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Saturday and Sunday.

The training has two phases: the first consists of acquiring basic skills as a trainer; the second phase involves putting the acquired skills into practice.

The first phase includes assessment of the skill level of the participants, communication skill training and/or upgrading. The workshops also provide opportunities for the participants to experience the training activities, to learn training methods and strategies, and to have supportive experiences in leading a training group.

The second phase of the training involves supervision of the trainers as they select and train their first group of peer counsellors. It is recommended that the trainers train in pairs as this will facilitate increased learning and effectiveness. In the second phase, not all of those who received the basic training may be working as trainers. The number of people actively training would depend upon the size of the project, the number of peer counsellors to be trained, and the number of trained people who actually want to train a group of adolescents. Those who choose not to train could help as supervisors, help administer the programme, etc.

Supervision of the trainers could involve any number of methods, such as meetings with the trainers in the community, by phone or by mail, or by taping the sessions and having the consultant de-brief the tapes either in person or by mail. The supervision schedule and method would be determined by the expressed needs of the trainers. Once the project is established, the consultant will remain available to meet with them regarding problems they may encounter.

b) Recruitment, Selection and Training of Peer Counsellors The next steps after the training of the trainers are recruiting and selecting future peer counsellors, delivering the training itself in small groups, providing supervised assignments, and supervising the programme.

(i) Recruitment and Selection

The school will be used as a model for the recruitment, selection and training of peer counsellors because it serves as a specific "how to" model. As well, for a juvenile crime prevention programme, a school (the school system) is perhaps the ideal location to base a peer counselling programme.

Since peer counselling is based on well-documented evidence that peers seek help from peers, it is clear that many students are already providing some kind of help to other students. For training purposes it is helpful if these students can identify themselves through requests for volunteers who

are interested in counselling or helping. Generally two questions are asked to help student volunteers become interested: 1) "Have you ever tried to help a friend, but didn't know what to do?" and 2) "Do you know what it's like to have worries, concerns, frustrations?" In addition to seeking volunteers, students are encouraged to nominate other students, and staff to nominate students. (Sometimes these nominations are quite different from each other.) Parents are also asked to nominate potential peer counsellors. Finally, the use of empirical nominations may be used to both identify and verify activities. Examples of such approaches include sociograms (who talks to whom) and class play techniques (who would you choose to play the role of a people helper in this play). Also, students can be identified by using student vernacular when asked to define the social groupings in the school community, (for example, "heads, greasers, sucks") and by asking students if they know people who fit into more that one group. Circles representing each of the groups of students identified can be drawn on a blackboard. The circles should intersect so that at one point all the circles overlap (part of our definition of a network). Students should then be asked to identify other students who would fit into the intersections.

Written and personal requests are then made of students whose names have been received from the variety of nomination methods, and together with the volunteers, they hold an information meeting. The meeting is advertised through bulletins, announcements, word-of-mouth, posters, staff meetings, speakers' programmes, and in-class recruiting. Once a programme has been initiated, peer counsellors can take over these activities in order to implement the philosophy of students speaking to students. Peer counselling programmes have begun to realize that teen to teen communication may be the most effective method of reaching teenage audiences (Carr, 1980).

Peer counselling and other volunteer programmes find a high number of female students volunteering. This is easy to understand since these young women are often more aware than their male counterparts of their values of caring and expressing concern for others. This imbalance can be modified by encouraging the female participants to directly recruit or talk to male students. This method has proven very effective in the recruitment of young men.

At the information meeting, the training and the potential uses of peer counsellors and of the programme are described, questions are fielded and then the students are asked to demonstrate their interest. At this meeting, the purpose of one of the questions that is usually asked of the students is to determine if this type of programme is fitting in with student needs. When this is asked, the answer is always a resounding "yes".

Generally, more students volunteer than can be trained at any one time. Students who are not being trained should be put on a waiting list. For a research-oriented project, persons on the waiting list can serve as a control group. For the students wanting to participate in the programme, parental permission should be obtained. At the information meeting, a parent information/permission letter can be distributed. This letter can be used not only to inform and educate the parents, but also to ensure their support. The letter should have enough detail in it so that parents can make an informed decision. Anybody who works with students and sends things home to be signed knows how frustrating it can be trying to have the forms returned. It has been the experience of many peer counselling programmes that the letter is returned quickly, sometimes with handwritten post-scripts agreeing with the idea.

When the letter is returned, each student is interviewed at which time they are asked about themselves and their experiences in relating to others. Their learning styles are also assessed at this point. This can be done by interview and/or with a specific instrument such as the Inventory developed by Dunn and Dunn (1978). Students are given feedback about their style primarily to determine how interested they are in hearing about themselves. Generally, a decision to advance to training is made solely on the basis of two behavioral criteria:

a) are the students receptive to knowing about themselves,

b) do they have severe emotional problems which would make them unable to use the training or which would interfere with the training.

If the answer is "yes" to this second question, a possible referral to either school or community resources is discussed with the student. Since students experiencing a variety of developmental problems can not only benefit from the training, but can also serve as excellent helpers for students with similar concerns (such as juvenile delinquency), it is important to consider and define the term "severe". A clinical judgement quite often needs to be made prior to the acceptance or rejection of a student to the programme. However, if the major goal of a peer counselling programme is to increase the number of students who **have** and **use** helping skills, the training should not be used as a substitute for group counselling or therapy.

Depending upon the objective(s) of a specific peer counselling programme, other criteria for selection can be added such as attendance, grade level, recommendation(s), age, experience with drugs and/or alcohol, and so forth. Also, when adolescents who are considered on the "fringe" are selected, it must be realized that it takes more work on the part of the

trainers/supervisors in preparing these young people for working with others and supporting them when doing so.

Some other considerations when selecting peer counsellors are: how accessible is the programme going to be? That is, if the goal of the project is to make it open to the entire school population (adolescent population of a community), then the makeup of that population has to be known. For example, if a school has a 40 percent native population, but no natives are selected as peer counsellors, then the project could be 40 percent less effective than desired. Therefore, before selecting peer counsellors:

1. clearly define the objectives of the programme;
2. outline how those objectives might be achieved;
3. know the population that is to be served by the programme.

When selecting the first group of peer counsellors, two additional criteria might be considered:

1. that the adolescents be highly motivated and reliable
2. that they have above-average verbal skills.

The reason for these criteria is that these young people are going to be the core or foundation on which the project will be built. Therefore, it is important to try to ensure that there is a solid foundation to work from.

(ii) Training Process

Training groups usually consist of 10 to 14 participants and the training has two phases. The first phase usually involves 12 to 16 training sessions of one to two hours, ideally scheduled twice a week so that initial training will take about six or eight weeks. Training also can be conducted after school, in the evenings, on weekends for a few hours, or in whole-day intensive training sessions on the weekends.

The second phase consists of a series of supervised assignments resembling a practicum and weekly supervision meetings. Since the training methods are learning-based, each training session is structured with a systematic process to maximize student skill development. Each session begins with continuity: old business is discussed, concerns are expressed, opportunities for caring and sharing with others are given, and homework is discussed. The next phase has an awareness portion where a description or directions are given for the day's session; the rationale and purpose are briefly stated; students make a self-calibration and/or declare their need concerning the topic and relate how it might fit them from their frame of reference. The third phase emphasizes know-how where a demonstration is provided, a lecturette delivered, and group techniques are utilized, such as creative use, brainstorming, role play or modelling. Following this is the assertiveness section where students work in pairs, or trios doing simulations or other experiential activities. The process phase follows where observers give feedback, the quality of the experience is discussed, and synthesis, integration and summarization are eventual outcomes. The session concludes with a practice phase where homework is assigned and then the cycle begins again with continuity at the next session. Homework is often an applied assignment focussed on generalizing the learning from the session to the cultural world of the student. These steps are closely monitored to discover particular spots where the training cannot move on to the next step because a previous step has not been covered adequately. The trainers rely continuously on feedback, observation and actual skill performance and may recycle back to a particular step whenever needs dictate such a move.

(iii) Training Content

Twelve core topics are identified which are essential to peer

counselling and are detailed in step-by-step procedures for the activities in the training manual (Carr and Saunders, 1979). The content covered consists of: getting acquainted with strangers; attending skills; roadblocks to better communication; self-disclosure and expression of feelings; listening; empathy training; questioning; assertiveness or "I messages"; feedback skills; values clarification; decision-making; problem-solving; ethics; confidentiality and referral.

Once the core skills have been reasonably mastered, it is recommended that programmes develop practicum topics from the experiences of the students trying to implement their new skills. Students may feel awkward, mechanical or phoney during this time, but these feelings and thoughts are a part of the learning process and need to be looked at and understood. Handling silence, talking to students whose behaviors you don't like, trying the skills in a group setting, and getting rebuffed are all examples of specific problems students bring up which are turned into training sessions.

The final elements of the training occur during supervision when special topics are introduced which relate to specific problems such as drugs, crime, parents, career decisions, pregnancy. Speakers who support process learning may be introduced to talk about certain areas or the trainers may do refreshers in the core areas.

The training model begins with a pre-determined structure and ends with a student-determined structure. The emphasis on process is retained throughout, yet as trainers, we are sensitive to the needs of the students so that neither the structure nor the process acts as a barrier to truly understanding and fully relating to our student trainees. In other words, we remain student-centered rather than strictly agenda-centered.

(iv) Assignments as Peer Counsellors

When the approximately thirty hours training has been completed, the trainer(s) meet(s) with each student individually, and, applying the guidelines from the activities on feedback, discuss(es) with the student how he or she did on the training, what age level or kinds of problems that he or she would like to deal with, type of setting or context prefered, and the readiness of the student to take on an assignment. Some students, through mutual decision, agree to take the training again, and are given assistant status. Certificates that look like diplomas can be presented to the students as a way of giving formal recognition of their efforts. Five major categories of assignments have been developed for students to work in: group activities, outreach/alert, one-on-one (referral), elementary focus, and external programmes. The focus of this proposal will be on outreach/alert, and assignment/referral.

4. Implementation, Supervision and Administration

In this section, three questions must be answered:

1. how will the programme be implemented?
2. how will the peer counsellors be supervised?
3. how will the project be administered?

Detailed answers to these questions can be given only when the specifics of the programme such as purpose, location and target population are provided. In the absence of these particulars, the implementation of a peer counselling programme and the supervision of peer counsellors will be discussed through the example of a school system.

For a project designed to prevent/reduce juvenile crime, the school/school system would seem to be the most logical place to start. It has the greatest concentration of children, Kindergarten through grade 12; it is important in the everyday life of most children; and the concept of prevention - that is, giving

people the skills/opportunity to deal with a situation when it is a problem or concern and before it becomes a crisis - could be widely inculcated. As mentioned earlier, two models for implementation in this type of project are the "outreach" and the "assignment/referral" approaches.

The **outreach** approach supports the students by tuning in to their existing network or paying attention to clues which may indicate that a student is having difficulty (a student slams a locker, a student is crying in the washroom, a student sits alone and dejected on the playing field, etc.). These informal and spontaneous contacts are the core of peer counselling. The peer counsellors usually experience immediate acceptance from the troubled student once that person sees that the peer offers genuine listening and caring. As the reputation of the programme increases, the contacts will increase and the resistance to seek help will decrease. Since this helping is dependent on the students' becoming involved in the many social networks in the school, it had been anticipated in the earlier development of peer counselling programmes that the peer counsellors would become an elite clique of their own, or be seen as "sucks". This has not happened. Though they remain friendly towards each other, peer counsellors usually do not socialize together and retain themselves in their primary social networks. In a sense, this finding reaffirms the need for a broad selection process.

The **assignment** model is usually based on a referral process where potential "clients" may be referred to the trainer (co-ordinator) by parents, counsellors, teachers, social workers, etc. The co-ordinator reviews the referral with the adult to determine its appropriateness and specificity. An assigned peer counsellor is encouraged to have the first meeting with the student over lunch because food is friendly, there is a specific time limit, and if it doesn't work out, they can always eat. Once the student and the peer counsellor begin meeting, progress is reviewed with the supervisor and modifications are made if the peer counsellor is in over his/her head.

Sometimes these referrals are just attempts to help students get to know other students and feel less lost or alone, or to enhance self-esteem. Other referrals can relate to specific problems such as drugs, peer relations, family concerns (needing to talk), etc.

The school is not the only place where the peer counsellors can work. They may become associated with another external programme such as a recreation center or in another community context. The outreach and/or assignment concept can be extended to have the trained peer counsellors work as summer street workers, aiding the groups of young people who gather at various locations on a regular basis throughout the city during the lengthy summer vacation. This concept can also be extended throughout the year perhaps working from the schools, recreation halls or community centers.

In a crime prevention programme, all of these assignments might be used with the addition of small groups run by peer leaders and trained adults. These groups would focus on the positive aspects of peer culture and would offer caring for each other's welfare. One way to do this is to use student values such as "being tough or strong" or "grown-up" and show how these values contradict criminal behavior which is infantile and childish. In other words, the group re-labels delinquent behavior using terms which force young people to rethink and reassess their direction. The present Student Leadership Programme of Traffic Safety Education involves students in developing and carrying out the objectives of traffic safety (increasing seat belt use, decreasing drinking and driving, etc.). This programme has implemented the theory of peer counselling presented here, and has been successful in achieving its goals beyond the traditional approaches created and conducted exclusively by professionals.

Regardless of assignment, formal or informal, on or off-campus, the peer counsellors meet weekly in a group to discuss their progress with their supervisors.

While the names of "clients" are not mentioned, the kinds of concerns brought up or discussed with the clients are brought forward with an emphasis on the peer counsellors' perceptions of how they handled the situations and the skills that they used. Sometimes it is clear that certain skills may need refreshing, so a workshop is scheduled; other times it is clear that there is a commonality to the problems that the clients are bringing up and that a possible system-oriented intervention can be developed and presented to change-makers. These weekly meetings enable the peer counsellors to experience support and autonomy while at the same time, see that they are not alone in trying to help other students work towards effective solutions to frustrating problems.

The importance of the supervision process with the peer counsellors cannot be over-emphasized. They are volunteers; they are being asked to give listening and support, and should receive the same from the supervisor(s); and the concept of process learning is continued on both sides. If a programme is based on an assignment and/or outreach model, the peer counsellors need to be well-trained and supervised. There also needs to be a defined and structured referral system so that referrals can be made to the peer counsellors and the peer counsellors have people/places to make referrals to. There are many other ways in which peer counsellors can be used, but again, their use depends upon the objectives of a particular project.

5. Evaluation

There is some disagreement in the peer counselling literature as to the merits of evaluating a peer counselling programme. Again the decision depends upon the objectives of the programme, the pressure of the conditions of any funding agreements, and the philosophy of those in charge of the programme.

Arguments aside, there are two methods of evaluation, unobtrusive and

obtrusive. Unobtrusive measurement is an attempt to gain data about a project without directly interfering in the operation of the project. Some methods of unobtrusive evaluation would be recording over time the levels of certain juvenile crimes such as vandalism, or breaking and entering. In a school, discipline referrals to the office, absenteesim rates, drug and alcohol problems, etc. would be noted. Peer counsellors who are working in an outreach programme could keep a log of activities and intervention. There would be no mention of names, but the log could record such things as male or female, age, number of contacts, type of problem, if a referral was made, etc. At the end of a month, for example, a supervisor might be able to say that ten peer counsellors had 150 primary contacts: 50 peer relationship problems, 25 drug/alcohol, 30 family concerns, 40 loneliness, and 5 sexual concerns. A total over a year could be very impressive and keeping track of the types of problems may provide some useful data. If an assignment programme is in operation, it would be a simple process to keep track of the number of referrals, type of problems, and outcomes.

If the trainers/supervisors are interested in assessing the skill level of the peer counsellors, an easy and effective method is through the use of videotape. Select two groups of teenagers; train one group and use the other as a control (untrained). Then videotape each person (both groups) in a helping interview both pre- and post training (Saunders, 1982). The videotape is helpful for three reasons:

1. it gives the trainer evidence of the skill level of the peer counsellors;
2. it gives the peer counsellors evidence of their improvement;
3. it serves as visual evidence that teenagers are capable not only of learning communication skills but, in many cases, of demonstrating these skills very effectively.

Obtrusive measures usually consist of surveys, questionnaires, interviews and other forms of psychological assessment. These measures are given to the peer

counsellors, to the clients of the peer counsellors, and to other parties involved with the project.

If evaluation is used, whatever the form, it must be kept in mind that evaluation must not be made merely for its own sake; but rather, there must be specific, defined purposes for such an assessment.

6. Summary

The research support for peer counselling methods and programmes is evident; the practical support is available; and the model for implementation exists. What is now needed is a definition of the context in which the project is to operate, such as location, purpose, target population, etc. With that information, the components of the peer counselling model and its options can be tailored to fit the defined objectives of a project.

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